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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 001790

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC REFORM STRATEGY FOR QATAR - QUARTERLY REPORT

REF: A. STATE 152818

[B](#). DOHA 881

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) This is a quarterly update on Embassy Doha's democratic reform action plan under the Middle East Partnership Initiative. This update addresses activities in three areas: strengthening the rule of law, developing open political competition, and developing civic education.

Rule of Law

[1](#)2. (C) Benchmarks:

-- Law number 22 of 2005 banning the use of camel jockeys under the age of 18 was passed in May and came into force in July of this year. Qatar repatriated nearly 200 child jockeys to Sudan in June and July. The Qatar Charitable Society, in coordination with the Sudanese-based National Council for Childhood Care and the Qatari Embassy in Khartoum is administering the Qatari government's program to look after the welfare of the repatriated camel jockeys.

-- In a further effort to combat trafficking in persons, The GOQ established a shelter in September to provide a haven for female domestic workers, children, and other laborers in need of protection from abusive employers and poor working conditions.

-- Bar Association: In October, a group of Qatari lawyers was given official approval to form an association under a 2004 law authorizing the creation of NGOs under certain conditions.

-- Elections law: Qatar continues at a cautious pace toward national legislative elections, most likely in early 2007. The GOQ is drafting an elections law behind closed doors. The issue of eligibility to vote is considered a matter of national security.

[1](#)3. (C) Recent Actions:

-- Over the past nine months, post has worked with the Commercial Law Development Program in several key areas: assisting Qatar University in development of a commercial law curriculum; working with the Ministry of Justice on continuing legal education; and advising the Ministry of Commerce on a new draft commercial code.

-- The Institute for the Study of Democratic Legal Systems hosted five Qatari judges on a study tour to examine California's several alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs. The judges reported their interest in establishing ADR in Qatar and in strengthening the country's case management system.

[1](#)4. (C) Planning:

-- CLDP will organize a Commercial Law regional conference in Doha in early 2006. CLDP will continue its cooperative work with Qatar University (on curriculum) and the Ministry of Commerce (on commercial laws).

-- Post will encourage the Qatari courts system to continue its engagement with ISDLS directly if MEPI participation is withdrawn.

-- Post is actively monitoring Qatar's steps to address trafficking in persons issues and its adherence to the Action Plan to avoid a Tier 3 ranking in 2006.

-- Post will meet representatives of the new Lawyers' Association and discuss training and capacity-building needs. MEPI Committee will review possibilities and begin engagement.

Open Political Competition

[1](#)5. (C) Benchmark:

-- Advisory Council elections. In June of this year, the new constitution, had been approved by popular vote in 2003, came into force. The constitution calls for a 2/3 elected legislative body. Senior government officials suggest that

elections will take place by early 2007, after a period devoted to formulating the election law and establishing electoral districts.

16. (C) Recent Actions:

-- Post expressed USG concern over the recent practice of withdrawing citizenship from members of a certain tribe and said inclusiveness, rather than exclusivity, was the basis for a strong democracy and state. The GOQ appeared to then moderate the practice, which as now ceased.

-- Post continued its advocacy on behalf of the International Republican Institute to obtain legal status in Qatar. IRI has been hampered by the inability to open an office and hire local staff. Post has regularly engaged the Elections Committee, the Foreign Minister, and the Deputy Foreign Minister.

-- Post pressed the GOQ to approve IRI study tours for Qatari elected officials and other IRI programs. The GOQ has been reluctant to approve such programs to date; we suspect because the broad formulation of the electoral process is not complete.

17. (C) Planning:

-- Post will work with IRI to determine the best course of action regarding legalization of the NGO's status in Qatar.

-- Post MEPI Committee will examine ways to provide election-related assistance such as training sessions or workshops through small grants or other means.

-- Post believes that journalist workshops on election coverage is premature, but the MEPI Committee will examine ways to encourage reporting on changes in government brought by the new constitution.

Developing Civic Education

18. (C) Benchmarks:

-- There is currently no civic education in schools; Qatar mandates Islamic studies in primary and secondary schools which touches upon some aspects of personal and social responsibility.

-- Student governments formed in the business and law departments of Qatar University.

19. (C) Recent Actions:

-- Post has contacted the California NGO Civitas to look at education materials that might be suitable for Qatari schools.

10. (C) Planning:

-- Post will discuss with the Qatari National Human Rights Committee on the feasibility of inviting Civitas to Doha for a series of seminars to train local teachers and share civic education curriculum.

-- MEPI Committee will evaluate and propose ways to engage the print and broadcast media in civic and governance issues.

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